THE TENTH DAY.

27th February 1919.

The Assembly met at 11-25 A. M. on Thursday, the 27th February 1919.

150. Suggestions for the elevation of the depressed classes.

Mr. S. V. E. A. Manikkam Chettiyar (Member, Nominated) represented that the Pulayas, Parayas and other depressed classes in the country occupied a low position in point of education, social status and wealth. Government had established separate schools for the use of backward communities. Many public schools had been thrown open to them and half-fee concession had also been granted. With all that, the progress of education among them was very little. That was because they found no time to attend schools, as they had to work during day time for earning their livelihood. The remedy lay in opening night schools in large numbers in the country. Some night schools had been opened by private gentlemen, but they were not sufficient. The Member then made the following suggestions for the amelioration of the depressed classes in the country:—

(1) Government should establish night schools in different parts of the country, especially in localities largely peopled by the depressed classes and arrangements should be made for appointing pensioned Government servants to conduct such schools, where the young and the old might learn. Elementary lessons on religion and thrift should be given. The difficulty lay in selecting teachers in real sympathy with the backward communities.

(2) The recent outcry of some classes of people in regard to admission to temples was the sign of a religious awakening in them. In order to encourage such an awakening, many of the defunct temples and *Vazhi Ambalams* which were not used for any purpose should be converted into temples for the use of those people. Government should take the initiative in the matter and notify to the public that grants would be offered to those who would work in that direction.

(3) The appointment of paid lecturers was necessary with a view to propagate good and noble ideas among the backward communities.

(4) Adequate measures should be adopted to afford them the necessary pecuniary help in order to enable them to bring under cultivation all the *puduval* lands registered in their names.

(5) Pulayas and Parayas should be given appointments in the menial establishments of the various departments. A certain proportion of such appointments in the Police and Excise Departments should be reserved for them.

(6) The Peishkars of the various Divisions should be asked to convene an annual conference of the backward classes in their respective head-quarters on the model of the one held at Trivandrum in connection with the Assembly.

Mr. A. K. Govindan Channar (Member, Nominated) said that, though Government had ordered the registry of large areas of lands in the names of the members of the depressed classes, they derived little advantage from it owing to the vagaries of the subordinates of the Revenue Department and their inability to find funds to cultivate the lands. The areas assigned to them were either passing into the hands of the members of other communities or being allowed to lie waste. There was, therefore, no use in ordering registry of *puduval* lands in their names. He, therefore, suggested the adoption of the cultural system followed in Java. Blocks of Government land, 400 or 500 acres in extent, should be entrusted to a contractor after selection by an Agricultural expert, the land being thereafter

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occupied by about 40 or 50 families of the depressed classes. Advances should be made by Government to the contractor to cultivate the land, the labour being supplied by the families settled on it and paid for at fixed rates. After recovering from the value of the produce a portion of the amount advanced by Government and allowing a certain percentage to the contractor for his trouble, the balance should be invested in the Savings Banks in the names of the families in proportion to the labour supplied by them. Thus, by the time the amount advanced by Government was completely recovered, the families settled on the land would have had a fund with which to cultivate it. The land should then be divided among the families and assigned to them. The system would work excellently in Travancore under the supervision of the Director of Agriculture and the Registrar of Co-operative Societies.

The Member then said that, in order to encourage the spread of education among the depressed classes, the literate among them should be employed in the Forest, Anchal, Agricultural and other Departments, and night schools should also be opened in large numbers where magic lantern lectures should be given on useful subjects. Non-attendance in schools should be penalised in the case of boys below twelve or fifteen. The boys should also be given books free of cost. The half-fee concession now allowed was not sufficient. The fees should be still further reduced.

It was high time that the rates of wages allowed to coolies and their hours of work were regulated. The small wages prevailing in the State led to the emigration of a large number of labourers every year.

The Sanitary Department should take special efforts to visit frequently the places inhabited by them and impress on them the need for cleanliness.

Further, they should be allowed equal rights of citizenship with the higher classes and those among them who had the necessary qualifications should be freely appointed in the Revenue and Military Departments.

Dewan's reply.—Noted.

151. Desirability of passing a rule requiring Government Officers to live and camp in places accessible to all cllasses of people.

Mr. P. I. Joseph (Member, T. I. C., Vaikom) spoke at length about the difficulties caused to Ezhavas and other communities by the caste Hindu officers living in places to which they had no access, and camping near temples. He knew that some officers like Tahsildars and Magistrates, who ought to be always accessible to the people, were living in such inconvenient quarters at present.

All public institutions also should be open to all classes of citizens. But several schools, satroms, &c., were situated in inaccessible localities.

The Member requested that immediate steps be taken to remove those grievances.

Dewan's reply.—Noted.

152. Needs of the Town of Padmanabhapuram.

Mr. T. K. Velu Pillai (Member, T. I. C., Padmanabhapuram) said that Padmanabhapuram which was once the capital of the State was dwindling in importance. The main reason was the removal of the local public offices to other places in the neighbourhood. He requested that in view to maintain the importance of the town, the Munsiff's court might be re-transferred to Padmanabhapuram from Thackalay. There was a public tank called the Perampancode tank. The Member prayed that it might be repaired at Government cost as the T. I. C. was too poor to undertake the work.

He also requested that the Medical Officer of the place might be made a member of the local Town Improvement Committee in the place of the Sub-Registrar.

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